

Obligation Of A Muslim Towards A Disbeliever

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From: "Answers to Common Questions From New Muslims"

[Q]: What is obligatory upon a Muslim with respect to non-Muslims concerning different types of interactions and also with respect to holidays and festivals?

[A]: The responsibility of a Muslim towards non-Muslims are many, including:

First, he must call them to the way of Allaah. This is to preach to them and to make clear to them the reality of Islam, according to his ability and if he has the knowledge to do so. This is the greatest and best good deed that one could do toward his fellow citizen and for those who live together with Jews, Christians and other disbelievers. On this point, the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said,

"The one who guides to good gets the same reward
as the one who performs it." [Muslim]

The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) also told Ali, when he was sending him to Khaibar to encounter the Jews, to invite the Jews to Islam. He told him,

"By Allah, if Allah guides one person by you,
it is better for you than the best types of camels." [Agreed Upon}

The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) also said:

"Whoever calls to guidance will have a reward similar to the reward of the one
who follows him, without the reward of either of them being lessened at all."
[Muslim, Ahmad, Aboo Daawood, an-Nasaa'ee, at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah]

Calling them to Islam, preaching Islam to them and advising them concerning that is one of the most important deeds and is one of the best ways to get closer to Allah.

Second, [the Muslim] may not wrong the other person with respect to his life, wealth or honour, if the non-Muslim is a citizen of the Islamic state or has attained other protection. He must fulfil the other's rights. He may not wrong him with respect to his wealth by stealing from him, deceiving him or cheating him. He cannot harm him in his body by beating or killing him. His protection from the state guarantees his safety from such things.

Third, there is no prohibition concerning buying, selling, renting or other such business transactions with them. It has been authentically reported that the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) bought things from the polytheistic disbelievers. He also purchased items from Jews. In fact, when the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) died, his shield was being held as collateral with a Jewish person in exchange for food for his family.

Fourth, one should not give them the greetings of peace first. However, one responds to their greetings. The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said,

"Do not give the greetings of peace first to the Jew or Christian." [Muslim]

He (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) also said,

"If the people of the book give you the greeting of peace, then say, 'Wa Alaikum (and upon you).'" [Al-Bukhaaree]

Therefore, a Muslim does not greet a non-Muslim first. But when a Jew, Christian or other disbeliever greets him, he replies, *"And upon you also,"* as the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) has ordered.

This is from the rights of conduct between a Muslim and a disbeliever. He also must be neighbourly toward his non-Muslim neighbour. If your neighbour is good to you, you do not harm him and you may even give him charity if he is poor or give him a gift if he is rich. You may also advise him concerning what is good for him. All of this may lead him to want to learn about Islam and become a Muslim and because neighbours have very great rights. The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said,

"The Angel Gabriel kept advising me concerning the neighbour until I thought he was going to inherit [from his neighbour]." [Agreed Upon]

Allaah also says in the Qur'aan:

"Allaah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and drove you not from your homes. Verily, Allaah loves those who deal with equity"
[Al-Mumtahinah (60):7]

It is recorded in an authentic hadith from Asma bint Abu Bakr that her mother, who was a polytheist, visited her and asked for her assistance - this was during the time of the peace treaty between the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) and the disbelievers so she went to the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) to ask him about that and he told her to keep the ties of kinship with her and be righteous towards her.

Fifth, a Muslim should not participate with them in their greetings and festivals. However, one may give them condolences upon the death of someone if he finds some legal benefit in doing so. He may say to them,

"May future bring good to you," or something of that nature. He may not say, "May Allah forgive him," or, "May Allaah have mercy on him," if the person who died was a disbeliever (see Qur'aan (9):113). That is, one may not make prayers for a dead disbeliever although one may ask for guidance for those who are alive and so forth.